

MENNONITE HISTORICAL BULLETIN

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Moses G. Horning and the Old Order Divisions in Pennsylvania

EMMA HURST

This sketch pertains to the life of the late Moses G. Horning (1870-1955) of Bowmansville, minister and bishop in the Old Order Mennonite Church. He was the senior bishop in my home church, Martindale, Pennsylvania, from 1925 until his death in 1955.

Moses Gehman Horning was the son of Moses Musser and Lavina Gehman Horning. He was born July 14, 1870, the ninth child in a family of eleven children. At this time his parents lived near Von Neida's Mill, Bowmansville, Pennsylvania. Here he attended the White Oak School and grew to manhood with his three sisters and seven brothers. At 18 years of age he worked as a farm hand for Jonas Martin, the well-known bishop of the Old Order Mennonites of Lancaster County, for a year. Following this year of service he went to Richfield, Juniata County, Pennsylvania, where he worked for his brother-in-law, John Kurtz, as a farm hand for three years.¹

During his last year of service with his brother-in-law, Moses was voted in as a candidate for minister at the Brick Mennonite Meetinghouse located two miles east of Richfield, Juniata County. On the morning of June 4, 1891, while the whole household was on the way to the ordination in the family carriage the conversation was naturally centered on who should be ordained. Mrs. Kurtz remarked that "perhaps the new minister is with us in this carriage." But Moses had not thought so because he was only twenty years old and unmarried. However, when the lot was cast among Fred Lauver, Abram Brubaker, Samuel Sholtzberger, and Moses Horning, it fell on Moses and he was ordained to the ministry.²

Moses was married to Annie Musser, Thompsonstown, Juniata County, July 19, 1891. That fall he bought a small farm near Port Treverton, Snyder County, and moved the following spring and began house-keeping. In this new area he served as minister at the Susquehanna Meetinghouse for three years.

During this time the Sunday school question had come to a head in Lancaster County, which resulted in the 1893 schism under the leadership of Jonas H. Martin who withdrew with a group of followers from the Lancaster Conference and formed the Weaverland Conference. Because Moses was also opposed to the advent of Sunday schools in this county he moved to Lancaster County along with a few other families, and became a member of the Weaverland Conference where he continued his ministry. After returning from Snyder County he resided for a few years on the home place where he had been born.

Due to ill health he moved to a smaller farm near Bowmansville Mennonite Church where he lived from about 1897 until 1910. At the age of thirty Moses became seriously ill with a mastoid infection and was unconscious for nearly a week. While in this state he found himself laboring up a steep, dark mountain side. When he finally reached the

top he looked into the beautiful, brilliant valley before him where he saw Jesus, the good Shepherd, with His flock of sheep. At this point Moses asked the Lord to be a lamb in His flock. But the answer came, "Not yet." And so Moses had to leave that lovely scene. When he regained consciousness he asked, "Am I still alive?"³

In 1910 Moses and his family moved to another farm near Fivepointville. On the Sunday of August 10, 1913, while Moses had gone to Stony Brook Church, York County, to preach, lightning struck his barn and it burned to the ground. Although his wife and three of the children were at home, there was little they could do to save it. Since Moses could not be notified of the disaster he knew nothing about it until he saw the smoldering ruins on his return. But Moses' loss was soon replaced with the generous contributions of the church and neighbors of many denominations. Not only did they contribute money, but they also gave their time and efforts to clean up the debris and assisted in putting up the new structure. When the new barn was completed there was still some

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A group of Dutch Anabaptists in the 16th century engaged secretly in a religious meeting on a boat. From an engraving by Jan Luyken, *Martelaers Spiegel der Doops-Gesinde* (Amsterdam, 1685), Vol. II, p. 385.

MOSES G. HORNING

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money left which Moses gave to the needy.⁴

This incident is an illustration of the love and sympathy which people had for Moses and also indicates that his own life reflected understanding and kindness. He had a quiet nature and yet was the possessor of a very droll sense of humor. One of his greater virtues was the ability to speak evil of no man. This fact has been confirmed by numerous persons. When there would have been a just cause to speak unkindly of any one person, Moses would say, "I suppose he or she can't help it."⁵

In 1914 Bishop Jonas H. Martin requested that an assistant bishop be ordained since he was advancing in years. So Moses was among the candidates for bishop. At the ordination on June 14, 1914, every man rose and took his book except Moses who remained seated. After a pause two men assisted him to his feet when he collapsed in a faint. After he regained consciousness Bishop Jonas told him to take his book to which he replied "I can't." Then the books were examined beginning at the first, but the lot was found in the book which Moses had not picked up. Upon this discovery Moses G. Horning was ordained bishop. After the ordination some folks said: "This is our man; he's so plain!" and "This is little David." However, others said, "He will separate the church."⁶

Six or eight years after this a new problem began to face the church. This was the advent of the automobile among members of the church. Some of the church officials felt that the automobile was a worldly possession and could have no place in the Christian's life. Consequently, members who owned cars were excommunicated. Bishop Jonas H. Martin and Bishop John Dan Wenger, Dayton, Virginia, and several ministers held strongly to this view. They also contended that the church should be separate from the world; cars were highly esteemed among men; they were also dangerous and costly and the ruination of the young people; those who wanted cars were a worldly, popular class of people and were proud and dressed more fashionable than the rest.⁷

It must also be understood that not nearly all of the church officials

and members shared the above views. In this latter group was Moses Horning and several ministers and deacons. Moses' opinion was that the car was practical and that it had come to stay. Because he was a man of few words and an advocate of peace his contentions were few. Yet the burden of the problem weighed heavily on Moses to the extent that he suffered much emotional distress. He lost much sleep and many times became quite ill when approached by his opponents.

Because of the difference in the views of Moses and Bishop Jonas, Jonas did not wish to hand the church over to Bishop Moses in the summer of 1925 when Jonas was on his death bed. Consequently he called Bishop John Dan Wenger, Dayton, Virginia, to his bedside and asked him to stand by his cause for the church.⁸

After Jonas Martin's death Moses could no longer excommunicate church members just for owning cars because of the passage in Romans 2:1, where we read: "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself, for thou that judgest doest the same things." This applied because most members occasionally rode in other people's cars, yet to own one meant excommunication. This was inconsistent in Moses' thinking and he could no longer do it with a clear conscience.⁹

Following an ineffective conference in the spring of 1927 Moses announced communion services to be held at Groffdale on Easter Sunday for all those who were at peace with one another. At this service many persons did not participate. The following week a conference was held among the anti-automobile group. Two weeks after communion Joseph O. Wenger, the leading minister of the opposing group informed the other ministers in the ante-room before the service that their group had decided to announce services for themselves at that place the following Sunday. This was then publicly announced and thus another sect of Mennonites came into being known as the Groffdale Conference.¹⁰

A schism was far from Moses' idea of a solution for the problem, but he had done what he could to establish peace and understanding, often spending much time in prayer.¹¹ Shortly following this unpleasant

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Memories of Abraham Blosser's Printing Business

P. J. BLOSSER

(The following report about a small Mennonite printing and publishing establishment near Harrisonburg, Virginia, was written at the request of Grant M. Stoltzfus. Its appearance here may suggest to others the importance of committing to writing similar "memories" about significant events in our Mennonite past before they are forgotten. Ed.)

Perhaps it would be in order to give my first impressions of my grandfather. He was a studious man, a constant reader in his spare moments. It was said he could read four different languages, German, English, French, and Latin. I knew he was well versed in German and English. I heard it said frequently he was well educated for that time.

He held for a number of years the position of county surveyor for Rockingham County, Virginia. How he came to hold this position, whether by election or appointment, I do not know.

It was in my early boyhood days when we lived near grandfather. I heard it said that he had a conviction that a church paper should be printed. My parents and others spoke of his concern.

When a printing press owned by Joseph Funk and Sons at Singers Glen, Virginia, came up for sale, grandfather purchased the press. Then his convictions began to materialize. The log cabin on the present Burkholder dairy farm was planned for use. Since it was not quite high enough for the press to be operated in it, grandfather built a small building about 100 feet west of the log building for the press. The log cabin was used for type setting and arranging the plates for the press. David Taylor was secured to assist in the management of the project, so the publishing of *The Watchful Pilgrim* began and grandfather's dreams became a reality.

Neither of my uncles nor my father had any financial interest in the project. Grandfather, however, had their hearty moral support. My Aunt Fanny, who was the youngest in the family, assisted in the editorial work, and helped to secure suitable material for publication.

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The *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* is published quarterly by the Historical and Research Committee of Mennonite General Conference and distributed to the members of the Mennonite Historical Association. Editor: Irvin B. Horst; Co-Editor: Melvin Gingerich; Associate Editors: Harold S. Bender, Ernest R. Clemens, Ira D. Landis, Herman Ropp, John W. Snyder, Nelson P. Springer, Grant M. Stoltzfus, Gerald Studer, John C. Wenger, Samuel S. Wenger. Dues for regular membership (\$2.00 per year), contributing membership (\$5.00 per year), or sustaining membership (\$10.00 per year) may be sent to the treasurer of the Association, Ira D. Landis, Route 1 Bareville, Pennsylvania. Articles and news items should be addressed to the editor, Irvin B. Horst, Eastern Mennonite College, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

News and Notes

300 YEARS. At a recent meeting of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference Historical Society, Christian Kurtz of Elverson, Pennsylvania, called attention to the fact that in 1960 exactly 300 years will have passed since the *Martyrs Mirror* was first published. It first appeared in 1660 at Dordrecht in the Netherlands as a large folio volume of more than a thousand pages. Its author, Thielman Jansz van Braght, a minister of the Flemish Mennonites at Dordrecht, died prematurely in 1664, but the book was a success, and in 1685 it was reprinted at Amsterdam in a very expensive two-volume edition with fine engravings. This pretty well marked the end of the European history of the book. Thereafter it became chiefly an American book in German and English translation. The German translation in the Ephrata edition, however, was reprinted in 1780 at Pirmasens in the Palatinate. For American Mennonites in the Colonial Period and later it stood alongside the Bible as a major source of religious faith in the Anabaptist tradition. In the July issue of the *Bulletin* we hope to carry a feature article about this tercentenary.

400 YEARS. Speaking of anniversaries we are reminded that in 1961 400 years will have passed since the death of Menno Simons. The date of his death in 1561 has never been fully documented, but scholars have been inclined to accept this date rather than the 1559 one. In 1959 several articles about Menno Simons appeared in German papers, but the earlier date represents older scholarship which is no longer supported. In this country and in Holland a number of plans are in the making to recall in 1961 the work of this great Anabaptist leader who more than any other one man shaped the history of the Mennonites.

NEW PERIODICAL. As announced in the previous issue of the *Bulletin* the Lancaster Mennonite Conference Historical Society has undertaken the publication of a quarterly historical periodical named *Mennonite Research Journal*. The first issue, dated April, 1960, is now off the press. It consists of 12 pages in large quarto, has illustrations, and is printed on light green paper stock. Among the items of unusual interest in the first issue are reprints of the earliest known naturalizations list of Lancaster Mennonites, authorized in 1729, and the 1881 Lancaster Conference Discipline, which evidently was the first one to be printed. Coming as it does from the next to the oldest and the largest conference of Mennonites in America we may expect

this paper to make an important contribution to the history of Mennonites in America. The masthead does not name the editor, but it may be obtained by subscription at \$2.00 a year from Ira D. Landis, Route 1, Bareville, Pennsylvania.

LATE APPEARANCE. Due to a study of possible changes in format for Volume XXI and the lack of a schedule on the part of the editor in submitting copy to the printer, the January and April issues of the *Bulletin* appeared late. The minutes of the 1959 meeting of the Historical Committee were late due to lack of space in the October 1959 issue, where they normally appear when the Committee meets in June, in order to accommodate the index. We owe our readers an explanation and an apology for these delays. Barring unforeseen events the July and future issues of the *Bulletin* should appear on time.

BOUND VOLUMES. Melvin Gingerich reports the sale of more than twenty copies of the bound volumes of the *Bulletin* covering the period 1940-59. This is encouraging. As indicated in the April issue a limited quantity of these bound volumes are available for \$5.00 each from the Mennonite Historical and Research Committee, 400 College Avenue, Goshen, Indiana. Yearly subscriptions plus the binding would have cost at least \$28.00 for the twenty-year set.

MENNONITE BIBLIOGRAPHY. A very useful aid in the field of Mennonite studies is the "Mennonite Bibliography," along with the "Mennonite Research in Progress," which appears annually in *Mennonite Life*. The current compilations are in the April 1960 issue of this periodical. Another source to check for current books published in the Mennonite field is the *Cumulative Book Index*, a reference work familiar to librarians, which is a listing of all books currently published in the English language. Among the books listed in the C.B.I. for 1959, which do not appear in the above bibliographies, are: D. E. Mast, *Salvation Full and Free* (Weatherford, Oklahoma, 1958), and Elmer L. Smith, *Studies in Amish Demography* (Harrisonburg, Virginia, 1959).

It is evident that a congregation or church cannot continue in the salutary doctrine and in a blameless and pious life without the proper practice of discipline. Even as a city without a wall and gates, or a field without an enclosure or fence, or a house without walls and doors, so is also a church without the true apostolic exclusion or ban.

—Menno Simons

ABRAHAM BLOSSER

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Jacob Blosser, grandfather's brother John's son, assisted David Taylor in typesetting. When I got older I was employed to roll the type. The roller I pushed over the type was of hard rubber. There were two other rollers of similar rubber construction turned so as to ink the roller I pushed across the type. Only one side of the paper was printed at a time. After a goodly stock of papers were printed, the plates were removed and plates for the other side were installed and the stock of papers were run through again to print the other side.

Today that would be considered a very slow process. We did not work on eight hour shifts, nor did we limit a day to ten hours. Our days were more often longer.

I often think of grandfather's seemingly untiring energy as he fed in the paper and operated the press with a lever. My job of rolling the type was a light task. I had a stool to sit on or stand as I preferred. It was more tedious than arduous. Aside from publishing *The Watchful Pilgrim* he did job work. He also translated some of Bishop Peter Burkholder's writings from German into English. I had these booklets in my library for many years. In 1917 I had a fire in my home. Part of my library was destroyed before the fire was put out, so these books were destroyed.

I shall here quote Mr. Frank Stover, (*Daily News Record*, Harrisonburg, Virginia, March 7, 1960): "The *Watchful Pilgrim* of March 15, 1885, seventy-five years ago this month, notes that the publication is beginning its fifth volume and has subscribers in Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Ohio, Tennessee, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Texas, Iowa, Michigan, Oregon and Canada."

The termination of grandfather's printing business was due to the following: Grandfather was taken down with a severe spell of typhoid fever. When the fever left him it was discovered a certain part of his brain was not functioning normally, while other parts of his brain were normal. His was a very unusual case. Doctors from Boston came to examine his case. This brain injury rendered him incapable to do any business. He died around three years later (1891).

—South English, Iowa

The true believers show in act and deed that they believe, are born of God and spiritually minded. They lead a pious, unblameable life before all men.

—Menno Simons

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experience Moses requested a bishop helper. As a result Joseph E. Hostetter was ordained to the office of bishop on August 4, 1927 at Weaverland.¹²

In time the church membership increased and new meetinghouses were added. By 1942 it became expedient to divide the Conference area into two bishop districts. With this new arrangement Moses, with the assistance of Bishop Joseph O. Weaver who was ordained June 18, 1942, served the congregations at Weaverland, Groffdale, Martindale, Bowmansville, Pequea, and Churchtown. Bishop Joseph E. Hostetter served the more outlying congregations at Springville, Meadow Valley, Fairview, and Stony Brook.

About the time of the schism Mrs. Horning's health was failing and after a lengthy illness passed away on May 25, 1928, and was buried in the Bowmansville Mennonite Cemetery. Later Moses became acquainted with Hettie Groff, Bareville, Pennsylvania, and married her October 27, 1929, and moved into her home at Bareville. Here they lived until 1944 when they moved to his son Banks' tenant house near Bowmansville. During their residence here Moses and Hettie were more or less overtaken by the infirmities of old age. Eventually it was impossible for them to keep up with the household duties. As a result they abandoned housekeeping October 15, 1952, and moved in with the family of Moses' eldest daughter, Katie (Mrs. Elam Nolt) near Farmersville, Pennsylvania, and remained there until Moses' death on February 16, 1955, at the age of 84 years.¹³

The funeral was held at the Weaverland stone meetinghouse on February 21, 1955. The text, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace" Luke 2:19, was chosen by the family with reference to Moses' vision during his illness at age 30. Bishops from affiliated conferences spoke on various other texts. His body was placed in its final resting place in the Old Order Mennonite Cemetery at Bowmansville, Pennsylvania.

The following incidents serve as illustrations of Moses' character and give an insight into his personality.

On a certain occasion council was being held at Groffdale about ordaining a new minister. When one of the members suggested that this was not the proper time for an ordination, Moses answered good naturedly, "All right, then we will wait and announce to the church that when you say the proper time has come we will then conduct the ordination." This type of answer

was certainly not anticipated and it greatly altered the counsellor's criticism, since he did not wish to take the blame nor the responsibility of a postponement. Consequently, the problem was immediately dismissed.¹⁴

One of Moses' favorite illustrations of the Christian life in his preaching was that of crossing a river in a rowboat. This had been an actual experience on the Juniata River. To accomplish this one must lay hold on the oars applying energy and effort to prevent drifting down stream. Yet there are those persons in life who seem satisfied to relax in the boat, drifting leisurely, and enjoying a good time. However, when wiser persons notice this great danger from the shore they call to the blithe ones in the boat to warn them of the rapids below which would mean certain disaster unless they labor diligently to overcome the powers of the waters. Likewise the Christian must be on his guard obeying the Word of God to enable him to withstand the powers of Satan. For without effort and concern we drift down the broad stream to destruction.¹⁵

At the time of a certain meeting in his latter years Moses could not be present. Therefore he sent his minister son Banks to answer for him. The son's testimony for his father were the following words taken from a German hymn:

Ehr ist ein Mann der Liebe,
Ein Freund der Einigkeit;
Er will, das man sich übe
In dem was würket Freud.
Und Fried in einem Sinn,
Der Zwestigkeit absage,
Sich brüderlich vertrage,
In Sanftmuth immerhin.¹⁶

As Moses advanced in years his memory began to fail. So much so that at times he could not finish the sentence which he had begun. On one occasion he greeted a visitor to his home, but could not recognize him. After further discussion and explanation he recalled the guest as Preacher Shaffer with whom he had served in his early ministry in Snyder County. Upon this happy discovery he asked to shake his caller's hand again for he was a friend Moses had not seen for many years. This was quite typical of Moses for he had a friendly welcome for everyone.¹⁷

Moses C. Horning served as an ordained man among the Old Order Mennonites for sixty years, of which forty were in the office of bishop. This was a period of change and unrest, but he sought to be a man of peace while deeply conscious of the traditional faith of the Mennonite Church.

FOOTNOTES:

¹ Interview with Banks M. Horning, Denver, Pennsylvania, son of Moses G. Horning, December 29, 1959.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Interview with Frank M. Horning, Ephrata, Pennsylvania, son of Moses G. Horning, March 8, 1960.

⁵ Banks M. Horning.

⁶ Interview with Bishop John Dan Wenger, Dayton, Virginia, co-laborer in the ministry until 1927, December 15, 1959.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Banks M. Horning.

¹⁰ Interview with Bishop Joseph E. Hostetter, Ephrata, Pennsylvania, co-laborer in the ministry, December 29, 1959.

¹¹ Frank M. Horning.

¹² Martin G. Weaver, *Mennonites of Lancaster County*, Mennonite Publishing Company, Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, 1931, p. 389.

¹³ Banks M. Horning.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Interview with Bishop Joseph O. Weaver, New Holland, Pennsylvania, Moses' assistant bishop and co-laborer in the ministry, January 2, 1960.

¹⁶ Banks M. Horning.

¹⁷ Interview with David N. Zimmerman, Ephrata, Pennsylvania, son of the late Preacher Menno Zimmerman, a co-laborer in the ministry, December 29, 1959.

Book Review

Memories of Yesteryear. By Mary Eugenia Suter. Illustrated by Sally Wenger Weaver. Published by the author, Harrisonburg, Va., Route 4. Printed by Charles F. McClung, Printer, Inc., Waynesboro, Virginia, 1959. Pp. 187. \$10.00.

The history of another Virginia Mennonite family, published in an attractive format, is now available. In her 187-page history of the Daniel Suter (1808-1873) family, Miss Suter has not only recorded genealogical data but she devoted approximately two-thirds of the volume to such items as the Suter coat-of-arms, the place of the family origin in Switzerland, their settlement in Virginia, brief biographies of the seven second-generation Suters, and a collection of family stories. Chapters 8 to 24 are devoted to the Emanuel Suter family. Of particular interest is the account of Civil War days, the pottery operated by Emanuel Suter, and the Suter cabinet makers. The history is illustrated throughout with pen sketches by Sally Wenger Weaver. Twenty pages of excellent photographs are included in an unpaginated section at the back of the book. The genealogical section, set up by Nettie Suter, numbers 299 members of the Suter family. While the genealogical data is of special interest to family members, the general history contains much information about the Mennonite way of life during the 19th century.

—Grace Showalter

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